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Office Hrs MWF 9:00-9:50, TUTH 9:30-10:50, and other times by appointment.

CATALOGUE COURSE DESCRIPTION: **PHL 263 Contemporary Moral Issues.** [PHIL 2306] A study of major moral issues in contemporary society. Includes topics such as abortion, euthanasia, censorship, capital punishment, and other issues that confront today's society. Credit 3.

OBJECTIVES: (1) To provide students with background information relating to several contemporary moral issues, (2) to examine the diversity of views on the issues, (3) to provide an acquaintance with several different theories of ethics that affect people's views, and (4) to give students an opportunity to develop and express their own personal views on the issues.

PREFACE: I want to give you an idea of how I view this course. First, no one is an expert on all of the problems and issues we'll be discussing. They are too complicated and too diverse for that. Of course, some people are better informed, more thoughtful, or more sensitive than others in relation to a given issue, and it is my hope that all of us will become such persons as a result of this class. Second, I believe that an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom is absolutely essential. It is essential because we need to share our disagreements on these issues as honestly and fully as possible. We need to cultivate the ability to empathize with people and views that may repulse us at first hearing. We need this ability not only to understand more accurately others' views, but also to understand better our own.

My aim is not to convert anyone to my views about the issues. Instead, I will do my dead level best to give the various sides a fair chance to speak their piece and to make their case. I expect everyone in the class to make the same effort.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

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| (1) <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> 5 th ed. | by James and Stuart Rachels |
| (2) <i>Taking Sides: Moral Issues</i> 11th ed. | by Stephen Satris |
| (3) <i>Taking Sides: Bioethical Issues</i> 12 th ed. | by Carol Levine |
| (4) <i>The Ethics of Identity</i> | by Kwame Anthony Appiah |
| (5) Occasional Items that may be placed on electronic reserve | |

GRADING:

(1) Tests: There will be three major exams and a final exam, each worth 100 points, for a total of 400 points. Each test is announced in advance, and ordinarily there will be at least one class period for review before the exam. For each exam the student will be given a set of study questions, and the test will be a selection from those questions. The total points from the exams, plus a possible 24 points from the Question Zero assignments described below, plus a few points for class participation, determine the student's overall point total which can be more than 400 points. The overall point total is divided by 4 to get the final average. The grading scale is 90-100= A, 80-89= B, 70-79= C, 60-69= D, and below 60= F.

(2) Question Zero; For each Unit there will be a "Question Zero" that will be due the class period after the exam, with the exception of the final exam when it will be due on the day of the exam. Question Zero will be an opinion question that will require the student (a) to state his/her view on a particular issue and to explain the reasons that make his/her view seem more likely to be correct than other views, (b) to explain the strongest reasoning supporting an opposing view, and (c) to construct the strongest argument to negate the reasoning in (b). This question will be worth up to 6 extra points on the exam grade for that unit, and 6 points will be subtracted from the exam grade if the question is not done or not done acceptably. To be done acceptably the question must be typed, comply with standard grammar and spelling, and be on time.

(3) Extra credit for class participation: there will also be occasional credit of 1 to 3 points for class participation which gives evidence of noticeably informed and thoughtful consideration of the issues,

ABSENCES: In accordance with University regulations, I will take roll every period. I make no use of the absence record in determining grades. However, if you do not attend class, you must drop the course before the deadline of Wednesday, October 10; otherwise, you will receive an F.

MAKE-UPS: I *hate* to give make-up tests. They are ordinarily longer and harder than the regular test. You must have a good reason for missing a test; having another test the same day, for example, does not count as a good reason. If you must miss a test, please see me as soon as possible to let me know your reason for missing it. YOUR EXCUSE MUST BE WRITTEN AND APPROPRIATELY DOCUMENTED. AN EXCUSE THAT CANNOT BE VERIFIED WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THAT EXAM. Of course, if you have a valid excuse, then we will arrange for you to take a make-up as soon as possible.

STANDARD POLICIES: Each of these standard policies is stated in full on the Blackboard website for this course under Course Documents. I have extracted from the full statement a key element as a reminder of the policy in its entirety, but the student must download the posting on Blackboard to have the full policy statement. Here are the six standard policy matters: (1) NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. There will be no retroactive accommodations. (2) ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. (3) CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. (4) VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: It is at the instructor's discretion whether or not he/she will be allowed to remain. (5) ABSENCE ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS: A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present in advance to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). (6) COURSE EVALUATIONS: In accordance with University policy, students will have an opportunity near the end of the semester on a set day and time to complete a course evaluation.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE PHL 263.W04 Contemporary Moral Issues Fall 2007 12:00-12:50
August CID 4681 LDB 216

Unit I Four Influential Theories of Morality and the Abortion Issue

Mon 20 Moral Theories: Subjectivism and the Divine Command Theory. A handout of Notes on Moral Theories and Rachels Chap. 1 What is Morality?

Wed 22 Rachels Chap 3. Subjectivism in Ethics and notes on Classical Natural Law Theory

Fri 24 Rachels Chap. 4 Does Morality Depend on Religion? and Satris Issue 2 Does Morality Need Religion?

Mon 27 Levine Issue 8 Is Abortion Immoral? and a handout on the Line Drawing issue

Wed 29 Satris Issue 4 Is Abortion Immoral?

Fri 31 Rachels Chap. 5 Ethical Egoism & Satris Issue 3 Ayn Rand

September

Mon 3 Labor Day Holiday

Wed 5 Rachels Chap. 2 The Challenge of Cultural Relativism & Satris Issue 1 Is Moral Relativism Correct?

Fri 7 Levine Issue 2 Should Truth Telling Depend on a Patient's Culture?

Mon 10 Review for the First Exam

Wed 12 **First Exam—100 points—1/4 of final grade**

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE REVISED AS OF 9-24-07**Unit II Utilitarianism, Autonomy, and Issues of Euthanasia**

Fri 14 Rachels Chap. 6 The Utilitarian Approach

Mon 17 Appiah Chap. 1 The Ethics of Individuality--John Stuart Mill and the Harm Principle

Wed 19 Introduction to the Issue of Euthanasia. From a handout on Basic Concepts and Distinctions and Levine Issue 6 Physician Assisted Suicide

Fri 21 Satris Issue 16 Physician Assisted Suicide

Mon 24 More on euthanasia and physician assisted suicide

Wed 26 Appiah Chap. 2 Autonomy and Its Critics

Fri 28 Satris Issue 10 Should Drugs Be Legalized?

October

Mon 1 Satris Issue 6 Should Same Sex Marriage Be Allowed?

Wed 3 Rachels Chap. 7 The Debate Over Utilitarianism.

Fri 5 A handout from Peter Singer on Famine and the Obligation to Assist

Mon 8 Review for the Second Exam

Wed 10 **Second Exam—100 points—1/4 of final grade Last Day to Drop the Class.**

Unit III The Demands of Identity, Kantianism, the Social Contract

Fri 12 Appiah Chap. 3 The Demands of Identity

Mon 15 Rachels Chap. 9 Kant and Respect for Persons

Wed 17 Satris Issue 14 Should the Death Penalty Be Abolished?

Fri 19 More on Capital Punishment

Mon 22 Rachels Chap. 10 The Idea of a Social Contract and a handout on Bernard Gert

Wed 24 Levine Issue 14 Should Animal Experimentation Be Permitted?

Fri 26 Appiah Chap. 4 The Trouble with Culture

Mon 29 A Handout on John Rawls A Theory of Justice and an Introduction to Affirmative Action

Wed 31 Satris Issue 12 Affirmative Action

November

Fri 2 Review for the Third Exam

Mon 5 **Third Exam—100 points—1/4 of final grade**

Unit IV The Demands of the Universal versus the Demands of the Particular

Wed 7 Appiah Chap. 5 Soul Making

Fri 9 Levine Issue 11 Do Parents Harm Their Children When They Refuse Medical Treatment on Religious Grounds?

Mon 12 Appiah Chap. 6 Rooted Cosmopolitanism and a Handout on Human Rights

Wed 14 A handout on The Just War Theory

Fri 16 Rachels Chap. 8 Are There Absolute Moral Rules?

Mon 19 Satris Issue 15 Is Torture Ever Justified?

WEDNESDAY 21 THROUGH SUNDAY 25 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Mon 26 Rachels Chap. 12 The Ethics of Virtue and Levine Issue 7 Should Doctors Be Able to Refuse Demands for Futile Treatment?

Wed 28 Satris Issue 9 Buying and Selling Human Organs

Fri 30 Levine Issue 12 Stem Cell Research Ban

December

Mon 3 Levine Issue 13 Genetic Enhancement

Wed 5 Review for Final Exam. Last day of class.

Mon 10 2:00-4:00 Final Exam—100 points—1/4 of final grade

DEADLY FAULTS OF GRAMMAR, SPELLING, AND USAGE

1. Apostrophes--please do not write "it's" unless you mean the contraction for "it is." You would not write "hi's" or "her's," so do not write "it's" when you mean the possessive "its." But **do** use the apostrophe to show possession for nouns as in "the first doctor's opinion."
2. The Latin phrase "et cetera" is abbreviated "**etc.**"--**Not** "ect." which does not even pronounce correctly.
3. Proper spelling of "receive" and its relatives is helped if you remember "i before e except after c..."
4. Surely it is not **too** much to expect that you remember that there are two o's in **too**.
5. In speech "could have" and "should have" are contracted to form "could 've" and "should 've." Only the ignorant write the non-English "could of" and "should of."
6. How about trying to get straight "except" and "accept"? Perhaps mnemonics will help: "Everyone except Edward elected Elvira empress." vs. "Anthony accepted adversity admirably."
7. In the same vein, "The **E**instein **e**ffect **e**nded **e**verything" vs. "**A**nteaters **a**ffect **a**nts **a**dversely." If it helps, try to remember that "**e**ffect" is usually a noun, and "**a**ffect" is almost always a verb.
8. Notice the "try to" in the preceding. Delete the nonsense phrase "to try and" from your speech repertoire.
9. If you mean "they are" when writing a contraction, then write "they're." Then all you have to do is to keep straight the possessive term "their" and the pointer word "there" (the opposite of "here").
10. How about remembering "If you **lie**, I won't **believe** you" so that you can spell "believe" correctly?
11. Do not use the words "criterion" and "criteria" unless you can remember that you can have **only one criterion**, but **criteria** are **many**.
12. When you "**recite**" a poem you are "**citing**" it again. That is not the same as locating the building **site** where you first caught **sight** of the poem inscribed over a doorway.
13. Does it occur to you that if you omit one of the two R's in "occurred" you would wind up with something that rhymes with "cured"? And if there are two R's in "occurred," then how many should there be in "occurrence"?
14. Subject and verb should agree in number, so no "he don't" or "they doesn't."
15. There is no "ate" in "definitely," just as there not an "ate" in "finite" or "definite."